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Research Article

# The Millennial Generational Style: New Global Political and Economic Orientations

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**ABSTRACT**

In this paper, using Mannheim, I identify Millennials (covering both Gen Y and Gen Z) as a global generation that has spawned a new generational style. I provide a brief overview of the historical conditions that have shaped Millennials' life experiences. In a nutshell, Millennials have come of age in a new world marked by an ongoing shift in actorhood from macro structures to micro agents. I argue that this formative experience has impelled at least three meaningful norms that distinguish Millennials' generational style: *self-reliance, quotidianism and regeneration*. I then trace manifestations of these norms in politics and the economy. I suggest that in politics, the push for self-reliance takes the form of a *self-responsible citizen*, quotidianism is manifested through a shift towards *politics of the ordinary*, and regeneration is embodied in *Do-it-Yourself (DIY) politics*. In economics , on the other hand, the self-reliant actorhood is reflected through the *new occupational profile of the 'maker',* quotidianism is expressed through *non-traditional types of work* monetizing individuality and personality, and finally regeneration takes the form of *critical making*. I conclude with implications for social theory on youth and change. The paper attempts to move beyond the dichotomous view of youth either as threats or as heroic figures and propose a broader conceptualization of young adult's agency to capture how ordinary youth create new centers of configuration in society, from new citizenship norms to new market patterns.

**Keywords:** Millennials, Passion economy, Generation Z, Mannheim, Generational Style

**1. Introduction**

In June 2020, Turkey's President Erdogan for the very first time had a publicly streamed online meet-up via YouTube with students preparing to take the annual university entrance exam. The meet-up, in a matter of minutes, resulted in almost half a million dislikes and the hashtag *#OyMoyYok*— no votes for you. This public protest was a reaction to the government's decision to not delay the nation-wide exam despite the pandemic. The majority of students saw this decision as a move that sacrificed their health and future for the sake of protecting summer tourism. The fact that the Minister of Culture and Tourism owns travel sites and hotels only reinforced this view. What came next was even more striking. The 17-year-olds mobilized to drop negative comments and low scores to hotels and travel agencies owned by the Minister. In the matter of a night, the Zoomers lowered the ranking of the Minister's companies' score on Google Play from 4.1 to 1.1.

Just like the global youth protests of the 2010s led by the Generation Y (Gen Y), the dislike event starred by Zoomers, or Generation Z, offers us a critical moment to study generational change and observe how new members of the society transform politics and life more broadly.

One such generational change revealed by the dislike event is the redefinition of the political. Differing from previous generations, what mobilized Zoomers were not grand ideological narratives, partisanship, or collectivist rhetoric. Instead, the youth was mobilized around civil, personal, and quotidian demands: concerns about health and education and anxieties about one's future. The event also revealed that the youth bear a certain fluidity on arenas of political confrontation. While previous generations have been rooted to the ballot box, unions, and political parties , the youth are generating new spaces for political confrontation and new spheres of authority that remain outside the control of the state. O nline travel sites, for example, have beco me new arenas for protest and struggle; importantly one on which not the state but digitally savvy youth have greater authority and mastery. There are several other political novelties we can observe through this event; overall, however, the youth is reorganizing political engagement along more supple, network-oriented, and applicable sites.

Generational change spawned by contemporary youth in Turkey or elsewhere is certainly not limited to the political arena. Rather, new generational orientations transform almost any aspect of life from religion to leisure, science, education, and economy. Consider, for example, citizen journalism, political tourism, citizen science, crowd-work, and "passion economy" (Jin, 2019; Davidson, 2020); all spearheaded by Millennials. Similarly, consider Islamic content produced by young Muslim influencers, who tap into the Quran to formulate practical advice for establishing a successful company or to draw self-help mantras.

It is these new ways of relating to life constructed by a new generation, namely the Millennials, that constitute the main scope of this paper. By using the label Millennials, I refer both to Gen Y (born between 1980-1996) and Zoomers (born between 1996-2010), viewing them as separate waves of the same generation— Gen Y being the first and Zoomers constituting the second wave[1].

A vast amount of quantitative research has been done measuring various attitudes of Millennials: marital, educational, employment patterns, social and cultural values, and psychological traits— even on their responses to the Covid-19 induced quarantines (see for example Gerhardt, 2020). Yet despite the data overload on specific aspects of Millennials, we still lack a cohesive understanding of this generation. This paper constitutes a step towards building that missing generational profile

1 For a similar view supported quantitatively see, Parker, K., Graf, N., & Igielnik, R. (2019). Generation Z looks a lot like Millennials on key social and political issues. *Pew Research Center*, *17*.

of Millennials by inquiring into its distinctive worldview or *mentalité.* By building such a profile, we would also be able to infer specific Millennial attributes across spheres of society.

I built the framework of this inquiry on Mannheim's work on generations (1952) and conceptualize Millennials as a 'new global generation' that has spawned a 'new generational style' (a mentalité or entelechy).

In this paper, I first briefly review the global formative experiences of Millennials, which have shaped and formed their generational style. I then detail the content of this style and identify its core elements or norms. I argue that the Millennial generational style is marked by at least three meaningful and distinctive social norms: *self-reliance*, *quotidianism* and *regeneration.*

*Self-reliance* refers to a normative orientation to the self (and the individual) viewed as an actor that 'is' and that 'should be' central to the course of events. By *quotidianism,* I refer to a shift in focus and interest from grand narratives, ideologies and rhetoric toward quotidian issues, everyday life problems, and practical solutions. Finally, *regeneration* is the refusal of normative orientations and interpretations (tactics, meanings, values) imposed by macro, impersonal systems (the state, big corporations, IP services, experts, etc.) in exchange for greater public participation in production of things, processes, or interpretive schemes— whether regarding what it means to be a citizen, how to repurpose IKEA products, how to be spiritual, or how to define economic growth.

While generational change spawned by Millennials can be observed in almost any area of life, in this paper, I focus on documenting empirical manifestations of this new style and its core elements in the realms of politics and the economy. I conclude the paper with implications for social theory on youth and social change.

**2. Theoretical Framework: Mannheim and the Millennial Mentalité**

Although the dislike event motivated greater public and media attention on the new generation in Turkey, discussions quickly took a conventional course focusing on such questions as the youth's party preferences, electoral turn around, and ideological affinities. In a way this is instinctive given that Zoomers will make up about 4 million first- time voters in the next election (2023). Yet the conventional content of this debate is also expressive of an abiding problem that continues to inform our approach to the youth.

Since the 1970s, youth studies have been primarily concerned with the question of the continuation of the social order (see for example, Parsons, 1942; Eisenstadt, 1956) and in parallel have treated the youth as a subset of the general population, larger class cultures (Musgrove, 1964), or a biological stage in the life cycle (Elder,1974; Cain, 1964).

The most problematic result of these approaches is that understanding the youth as new members of society has been equated with measuring their attributes against the standards of previous generations. In turn, the potential agency of the youth for transforming the established order and standards is overlooked.

For instance, at the turn of century, Gen Y was measured to have alarmingly low levels of political participation when compared to previous generations. Subsequent examinations have demonstrated, nonetheless, that it was not that Millennials were disengaged; rather, they were engaging politics through new forms. These novel forms differed from the 'dutiful citizen' of the 20th century and its associated standards (such as voting, party affiliation, joining labor unions) (Earl et al., 2017; Sander & Putnam; 2010) and took new forms, such as volunteering and everyday life activism (Zukin et al., 2006).

This suggests that to inquire into lasting changes Millennial youth are creating, we first need to consider the youth as more than a mere subset of the society or biological groups and instead conceptualize the category of youth critically. We find this critical conceptualization in Mannheim's seminal work, *The Problem of Generations* (1952).

Differing both from functionalists and transition approaches, Mannheim understood generation as a formative social category— such as class position— denoting an individual's or group's location in the social structure (Pilcher, 1994). More specifically, he defined generation by referring to two connected elements: participation in a 'common destiny' (similar problems and similar experiences within a certain period) and as a result of that generational experience, forming an original mentalité or a generational style (Gilleard & Higgs, 2005). As such, for him, generations are not categorically the same as age-cohorts, and they do not emerge mechanically in terms of the biological succession (Thorpe & Inglis, 2019). Rather, whilst being young predisposes one to fresh mental patterns, "the biological rhythm must work itself out through the medium of social events' (Mannheim, 1952: 286). In fact, generations emerge, Mannheim writes, where the tempo of social change is so rapid that:

"…traditional patterns of experience, thought, and expression are no longer possible… the various new phases of experience are consolidated somewhere, forming a clearly distinguishable new im pulse, and a new centre of configuration. We speak in such cases of the formation of a new generation style, or of a new generation entelechy." (1952: 309).

Following Mannheim, I identify Millennials as a global generation shaped by a global common destiny, and who as a result of that common generational experience, have consolidated a new generational style.

Regarding the nature of this generational style, some scholars have advanced a primarily political reading and described Millennials as a "new political generation" (Milkman, 2017; Pickard, 2019). Others have called for an enlarged understanding of generations (Woodman and Wyn 2015; Gilleard & Higgs 2005; Bourdieu 1984; 1993), viewing 'generation' as a cultural field with a cultural content (for more on this scholarly division, see Aboim & Vasconcelos, 2014). These works also emphasize the role not only of political traumas and ideologies (precarious employment, terrorism, intercontinental immigration, etc.) but also cultural/aesthetic products and experiences (digitalization, higher levels of education, accessible travel, global flow of ideas, etc.) in the formation and binding of a new generation (Thorpe & Inglis, 2019).

Following this latter stream of work, this paper too opts for a more cultural interpretation, treating generation as a cultural field. I therefore view Millennials not merely as a new political generation but as a 'new generation', and the Millennial generational style not merely to be political but covering a huge array of practices, discourses, tastes, and values.

The core elements of Millennial generational style I identify in the paper (self-reliance, regeneration, quotidianism) impact not only political attitudes but transform how the youth relate to life more generally. In any case, politics is not a neatly closed box we can set apart from the rest of the society; if historical conditions were strong enough to create new political novelties, they must have created other new centers of configuration across other areas of life (economy, religion, leisure, etc).

The last theoretical point that needs clarification regards how this paper delineates the boundaries of who it identifies as the Millennial generation. Even though it is commonplace to see Zoomers and Generation Y as two separate generations, I view them both as waves of one large Millennial generation. Although Gen Y and Zoomers are members of different birth cohorts, sharing a common historical location or destiny, they are part of the same cultural field.

Finally, I view the Millennial generation to be a global generation, experiencing a common destiny that is not only globally connected but of which origins are entangled and transnational (Philipps, 2018). (Thorpe & Inglis, 2019; Edmunds & Turner, 2005; Beck, 2008; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2009). The idea that millennials are a global generation does not suggest that other locations such as nationality, ethnicity, class, gender, or religion play no role or that Millennials are a homogenous bunch without individual differences and division. In fact, a generation, as Mannheim argued (1952), is composed of several 'generational units' (*Generationseinheiten*) with different and opposing responses to a shared generational location, such as conservative versus liberal youth movements of 19th century Germany.

Comparably, if we consider 9/11 as a common generational experience, we will observe that it generated various and even opposing responses between Muslim and non-Muslim Millennials as well as within Muslim Millennials—some became more cosmopolitan, some insular (Edmunds & Turner, 2005); some became 'engaged-' and others 'dissenting-citizens' (Masquelier & Soares, 2016). Despite varying responses, nonetheless, the Millennial generation has been bounded by the unfolding of 9/11 (regarding travel, security, civil liberties, religious and national identities) as well as a number of other globally shared life situations (climate change, epidemics, immigration, mass shootings, massive destruction by large corporations, etc.), which create new collective memories, understandings, and impulses. In brief, different generational units can only be decoded to the extent that they belong to each other and are representative of the same generational Zeitgeist (Aboim & Vasconcelos, 2014). Therefore, it makes good analytical sense to conceive of Millennials not as a set of self-contained territorial units but as a global generation facing an essentially transnational cultural heritage and common destiny (Philipps, 2018; Cicchelli and Octobre, 2018).

In the following, I provide a brief overview of the common historical destiny that has shaped the experience and mindset of the Millennial generation. In a nutshell, Millennials have come of age in a world where actorhood has shifted away from macro-structures to micro-agents through a wave of socioeconomic transformations. While a detailed review of these transformations exceeds the scope of the paper, several theoretical generalizations will be made to demonstrate how this new order has prompted new collective impulses, self-reliance, quotidianism and regeneration among the new generation.

## 3. The Common Destiny of Millennials: the Macro-to-Micro Shift

From the 1970s onwards, a new world order in terms of governance and authority has been put in motion by a wave of global socioeconomic transformations, primarily including neo-liberalization of trade and economy and globalization on the one hand, and digitalization of life and a 'skill revolution' (Rosenau, 2003) on the other.

The large result of these transformations has been a macro-to-micro shift. Macro structures (the state, large corporations, intergovernmental organizations, knowledge-experts, traditional bodies) have been gradually losing their legitimacy and disciplinary power for being the primary bodies of governance, authority, and identity. In tandem, the same processes have both compelled and enabled the rise of micro-agents, particularly the individual, as new actors to take part in the shaping and steering of their own lives and that of societies.

### *3.1. Neo-Liberalization and Globalization*

One large process that underlies this shift has been the neo-liberalization of trade and economics . Across the world, while neo-liberalization opened space for civil mobilization, it has also

typically offloaded the state's welfare functions and severely reduced state subsidies, deepening as a result socio-economic inequalities and polarization.

This cumulative hammering of social and economic protections since the 1970s has gradually created a context of social and economic uncertainty and risk. By the time Millennials come of age, start applying for jobs, get an education, and manage health, interpersonal relations, and lifestyles (Beck, 2008), previously well-working patterns of growth or national prosperity already have lost their potential to help social actors solve economic and social challenges and attain their material and mental goals (Zacharia, 2021). This transformation has resulted in a loss of trust in the state (and state-oriented institutions such as political parties, representative democracy, collectivist structures) as an actor that can be relied upon for social and individual protection and progress.

The neo-liberal state's authority and governance crisis has been elevated by globalization. Globalization has reduced the state's monopolistic control over the flow of people and things (goods, jobs, pollution, ideas, crime) across national borders (Rosenau, 2017). From about the 1990s onwards the acceleration of the global flow of things, ideas and people has introduced to citizens' daily lives problems that are no longer simply local or national but transnational (terrorism, drug trade, pandemics, climate change, immigration, etc.). These problems require equally transnational solutions, making the state a "…host to forces that it can no longer adequately rein in" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006: 22).

Challenges to the state a re not confined to material issues either; as globalization increases , a 'culture of immediacy' (Tomlison, 2007) has emerged: a sense of connectedness and an increasing sensitivity to distant events, people, and processes (Rosenau, 2003). Territorial and national attachments remain relevant and important. H owever, people simultaneously attach to non-territorial and virtual communities around shared issues and perspectives and tap into new repositories to form their identity.

Beck demonstrated that this culture of immediacy has been paralleled by a "global culture of comparison" (Beck, 2008: 208). As sources of attachments and identity have moved outside of national boundaries, people's moral gaze have also moved beyond their territories, prompting a generalized sensitivity to global politics and global inequality (Gül, 2009). These cosmopolitan affiliations have also been underpinned by the growing centrality of human rights in a post-colonial context, rivalling the notion of citizenship-based rights (Frank & Meyer, 2002) Additionally, as Zacharia (2021) points out, Millennials have witnessed a series of events that have exposed the undermining of the moral order in society. This moral decay was both caused both directly by macro-structures, such as unethical leadership in businesses and politics, or indirectly as these structures could not help solving such global problems as terrorism or mass shootings.

Overall, these long-term processes have created a decentralized and multicentric world, shifting actorhood away from the state and state-centric units to micro agents, particularly individuals.

As individuals can no longer rely on macro structures for wrestling risk (Giddens, 1991), are wary of once well-working and collectively monitored tactics and lifepaths and move beyond territorial attachments to form their identity (Young, 1994; Bauman, 2001), they are also compelled to take action and solve collective and individual problems (Lash 2001). In other words, rather than delegating matters and responsibility solely to representative structures (formal organizations or political parties), citizens are now pressured to become self-reliant and responsible across various polities, from education, religion, family formation and political engagement to health, environmental protection, and women' rights (Frank & Meyer, 2002; Rosenau 2017; Giddens 1991; Bennett, 2012; Micheletti, 2002).

The increased mandate for self-reliance for articulating and aggregating collective and individual demands and needs also undermines previous cultural appeal and function of narratives associated with macro structures —ideologies, rhetoric, collectivist identities (Micheletti, 2002). Instead, people turn to everyday life and quotidian issues, practical solutions, and personalized expressions of identity and causes as new references and triggers for social and political engagement. Scholars have drawn on a variety of concepts to describe this change, including most notably: "personalized political action" (Bennett, 2012); "individualized collective action" (Micheletti, 2002); "everyday makers" (Bang & Eva, 1999; Bang, 2005); "life-politics" (Giddens, 1991); "sub-politics" (Beck, 1996).

The concept of "seriality" (Young, 1994) is particularly helpful to comprehend these emerging political and social subjectivities. Whereas in the state-centric world, political institutions, ideologies, fixed structures (class or ethnicity) positioned people politically and socially, in a decentralized multicentric world, individuals position themselves in and through a 'series' of identities, positions and causes: "…[one] can identify… as a taxpayer, bike rider, political consumer, dog owner, political scientist, or a local citizen irritated with the municipal park service. Each … can lead to solidarity with others in the same situation and spark people into collective action" (Micheletti, 2002:10-11).

Furthermore, as individuals are more pressured to intervene in an ever-growing number of polities and aspects of life, they question what is habitual, handed down and defined by impersonal systems, bureaucracy, and the state. Instead, they manufacture and regenerate new standards, normative orientations, organizational settings, and operating procedures. Millennials have starred in this process of regeneration: citizen journalism and YouTube streams compete against established media; non-hierarchical informal virtual networks compete against centralized, formal party membership; everyday activism competes against voting; social entrepreneurship competes against traditional civil society organizations; street-stylers and social-media influencers compete against traditional brand campaigns as well as career-movie stars.

### *3.2. Skill Revolution and Digitalization of Life*

Historical processes that culminated into the macro-to-micro shift have not only compelled but also enabled that shift. That is, as much as individuals have been forced to take up self-reliant actorhood, they have also simultaneously been empowered to do so. In Rosenau's terms, there has been a 'skill revolution' (2003): people everywhere have become more analytically and emotionally skillful and the public is more competent in coping with crises that mark contemporary life. With greater skills and responsibilities people have also become more cognizant of their power over macro-structures and the impact of their everyday acts and footprints (ecological or ethical) on the planet and societies.

Various factors are associated with this up-skilling of individuals, including higher education, transnationalization of life, easier travel, and most remarkably the rising internet literacy and the digitalization of life. By linking people to dense transnational networks, digital communication technologies increased people's access to all sorts of information, their capacity to generate information, and their ability to share that information (Castells 1996).

Digitalization, however, has played a much greater role than simply linking people in terms of the macro-to-micro shift. It has levelled the playing field between individuals and impersonal systems (large corporations, the state, macro actors) by lowering barriers (reduced costs and space, access to information and capital, access to dense social networks, etc.) to impactful action,

by making it possible for small actions to become globally scalable, and by enabling individuals to create tipping points— whether in respect to ordinary youth building a global company from scratch (consider, AirB&B, Uber, or Evernote) or triggering a global political protest.

So far, I have tried to briefly lay out the historical conditions that have come to build the biography of the Millennial generation, defined by the macro-to-micro shift. While this shift has impacted all generations, it has impacted Millennials the most, shaping and forming their life situations. This is unsurprising given the simple fact that Millennials were born into this new order. Empirical findings enforce this view. Millennials are the first generation of digital natives (Milkman, 2017). They are more skilled and educated than any previous generation but are met with the greatest levels of precarious employment and labor insecurity. They are exposed to increased environmental and health risks and a prolonged, non-linear transition to adulthood (Kalleberg 2011). They came of age in a global institutional setting supposedly cosmopolitan, diverse but they are confronted with persistent racism, discrimination, and exclusion. They have lower levels of trust in and satisfaction with democracy and political institutions than previous generations (Andretta & della Porta, 2020).

None of this is to suggest that all Millennials share the same levels of agency, capability, and access or that they share the same global orientations. Moreover, macro institutions, the state and territorial boundaries are still powerful and intact. The important point, however, is that in the new epoch, which constitutes the formative experience of the Millennials, agency is no longer limited to statesmen, large corporations, and impersonal systems. Change is no longer reserved for revolutionary events mobilized through grand narratives. Rather, the individual has become a significant variable and daily and often mundane domains, acts, and spaces have become significant places for restructuring societies and life.

In the following, I detail how the key Millennials norms (self-reliance, quotoidianism, and regeneration) are manifested in politics and economics . I suggest that in politics, the push for self-reliance takes the form of the self-responsible citizen, quotidianism is manifested through a shift towards ‘politics of the ordinary, and regeneration is embodied in Do-it-Yourself (DIY) politics. In economics , on the other hand, the self-reliant actorhood is reflected through the new occupational profile of the ‘maker’, quotidianism is expressed through non-traditional types of work monetizing individuality and personality, and finally regeneration takes the form of critical making.

## 4. The Millennial Style Examined

### *4.1. The Political Arena*

The Millennial generational style and its key elements have created new political subjectivities in the political arena transforming the ways in which young people think and act as citizens.

#### *4.1.1. Self-Reliance and Self-Responsible Citizen*

One globally applicable observation is that the mandate for *self-reliance* has given way to a new notion of citizenship among Millennials.

Conventional notions of citizenship are based on a logic of collectivism: political engagement is realized through representative organizations and interest groups (party or union membership) and within structured behaviors (electoral participation, handing out brochures, showing up at meetings, becoming a member, etc). Political identity, similarly, is shaped and molded through the priorities and agenda of those collective units (for more on this see Michelletti, 2003).

The push for self-reliance, however, impels a different logic. Being a citizen is defined less in terms of collective units and more in terms self-responsible individuals who are to take direct and personalized charge of matters they deem important. Political action needs not to be confined to a predefined set of behaviors, and is constituted through alternative social and political forms, ideas, practices, and commitments (della Porta, 2019). Political identity, similarly, is not limited to what is offered by organizational settings, such as partisan affiliations or collectivist preferences; a personally felt cause or an interest (environmental protection, high taxes, racial or gender inequality) can spontaneously create a strong enough self-responsibility response to become politicized.

Various terms have been used to define this new notion of citizenship: 'self-responsible citizen' (Micheletti, 2002), 'self-actualizing citizen' (Bennett, 2012), 'activated citizenship' (Cavatorta, 2012), and 'everyday makers' (Bang & Eva,1999). The common empirical result underpinning these concepts is, however, that when Millennials participate politically, they tend to do so on their own terms (Collin, 2015; Harris & Roose, 2014). This is not to suggest that they completely disengage mainstream politics. Milkman (2017), for example, demonstrated that Millennial movements in the US —namely, Black Lives Matter, Occupy, Sexual assault, Dreamers—engaged both conventional and non-conventional politics, pursuing both such traditional political outcomes as changes in legislations and broader aims such as altering habits and raising awareness.

The important point is that Millennials predominantly prefer action that has a self-responsibility dimension. That is, they participate in decentralized, noninstitutionalized, intermittent forms of political action, engaging various targets (governmental, manufactures, retailers, celebrities, etc. ) horizontally rather than in a hierarchy. Finally, their political activism takes place within various flows stretching from neighborhoods to national and global arenas. The Arab Spring showcased these youth-driven political subjectivities, which, differing both from the 1980s Eastern European uprisings and the anti-colonial struggles of the 20th century, were decentralized and lacking in charismatic leaders and hierarchy (Cavatorta, 2012).

#### *4.1.2. Quotidianism and Politics of the Ordinary*

Quotidianism is another key element that shapes how Millennials relate to politics and life more br oadly. Respective to the political arena, quotidianism is embodied in a shift toward 'politics of the ordinary'(Tiidenberg & Allaste, 2016). With that I mean a shift away from ideology, grand narratives, and rhetoric to issues, concrete problems, and practical solutions. The youth-led protests in the early 2000s evinced growing quotidian and personalized orientations among the youth globally. These mobilizations differed both from conventional movements based on ideology and formal group identifications (parties, Islamism, nationalism, etc.) and the `new' social movements of the 1960s which focused on group identity and meaning (Bennett, 2012). Both in the West and in the Muslim world, however, the youth mobilized by being concerned primarily with action that would improve their daily life, and coded their politics through personalized expressions of diverse needs and causes.

The Arab Awakening was particularly telling. Once thought to be mobilizable only by political Islam, the Arab street has become a site exposing new political codes and demands among the youth. What mobilized the streets was not exclusive ideological battles or slogans (Islamism, Western liberalism, socialism, etc) but demands for greater individual rights, a better life, and an end to collective inertia against authoritarianism (Challand, 2011). This observation included even youth affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood and Nasserist youth activists in Egypt (Hana-

fi, 2012). Overall, militant, religious, sectarian, and particularistic slogans, such as 'Islam is the solution', remained culturally and morally inferior to civil and quotidian political proposals (cleaner streets, liberties, greater life quality, etc.) (Hanafi, 2012).

Like the Arab Spring, the Indignados in Spain, Desperate Generation in Portugal, Israeli protests in 2011 or Occupy camps in the United States did not use conventional collective action frames based on class, party affiliation or ideological rhetoric. The Moroccan 20 Fevrier movement and movements in Russia in 2017 or Hong Kong in 2016 aimed, similarly, "…to fight corruption and make the government more accountable, particularly for their future " (Shana, 2017:7).

Largely, Millennial movements across the globe have articulated a new vocabulary capitalizing common societal problems (urban pollution, low quality education, or high taxes) around inclusive personal action frames, such as #Me-too or #We-are-the-99% (Bennett 2012). Importantly, inclusive action frames and an emphasis on issue-positions over ideological positions have lowered barriers for identification, enabling protests not only to diffuse nationally but also become transitionally connected. In Madrid, for example, Indignados viewed the Arab Spring as a legitimate youth movement and consciously "…framed their demands as 'youth issues' and avoided the typical political divisions in the post-Franquist context…" (Oettler & Schwarz, 2017:7).

#### *4.1.3. Regeneration and DIY Politics*

Finally, the Millennial impulse for *being regenerative* is embodied in the political arena through what can be loosely identified as Do-it-Yourself (DIY) politics. While DIY activity had previously been characterized primarily in terms of youth subcultures (McKay1998), the term now highlights a general desire to emancipate from the expertise and edicts of impersonal systems and make one's own decisions about aspects of life (Davies, 2017). In politics, similarly, DIY refers to the diversity of ways citizenship is enacted and performed by ordinary people, who hope and claim to define their own citizenship path (Ratto & Boler, 2014).

Electoral politics is still important; however, under the framework of DIY, political participation takes multiple new forms ranging from cyber-activism to working on the self (committing oneself to 'to be a good person' or to recycling), cultural production (writing for a local youth magazine or posting blogs), volunteer work and social activities with peers (hosting a community fashion parade, raising awareness and mobilizing supporters), ad hoc issues-based campaigns (ranging from migrant rights to environmental protection), political consumerism (both boycotting and "buycotting"), and guerilla art. In a nutshell, DIY politics expands and transforms the political topography.

The #oy-moy-yok digital protest in Turkey, for example, revealed new citizen action in unpredicted and seemingly apolitical locales, such as Google P lay. Young activists also brought into their protest equally unexpected actors. While their message was addressing political leaders, they also involved in their protest online travel agencies from across the world and even foreign tourists, who the youth wished to influence through scorings and comments on hotels owned by the Minister of Tourism.

Importantly, the desire to make your own culture and politics through DIY is not driven by self-centered beliefs that reject any collective notion, commitments, or ties. Focusing on the Arab youth and protests, Hanafi (2012) highlighted that the political subjectivity of the Arab revolution was not a total rejection of social structures, but not a domination by those structures either. Rather, it involved "…the constant negotiation of an actor with the existing social structure to realize a (partial) emancipation from it and to resist their disciplinary power" (203). In a sense, Millenni-

als' regenerative muscle can be understood as an attempt to regain some control over one's life in a chaotic world by enhancing the agency of ordinary people in politics or livelihood.

Additionally, the regenerative (DIY) activity is oriented, both explicitly and implicitly, to furthering public good, and personalized frames are acted out collectively. For example, as a personal act, recycling has immediate collective results and is an attempt to make the world a better (e.g., fairer, greener) place. Pickard (2019) has successfully picked up on this aspect and proposed the term Do-it-Ourselves (DIO) politics over DIY: "an entrepreneurial political participation that operates …through political initiatives and lifestyle choices in relation to ethical, moral, social and environmental themes…" (375).

Whether nonelectoral and socially interventionist DIY activities can lead to substantial political change is not examined in this paper. Yet, it is noteworthy that the DIY activities have already expanded access to public discussion and spheres of those who are silenced due to hegemonic exclusion. Both in the Arab Spring and #oy-moy-yok protests, using their mastery of digital media, the youth were able to voice their concerns, but more than that, they outwitted and circumnavigated the state and its disciplinary control.

### *4.2. Economy and Markets*

Following the global youth protests of the 2000s, many have logically focused on the political arena to understand Millennial generational novelties. However, Millennials have also spearheaded tectonic changes in the economy and markets, generating new market concepts and patterns, new growth industries, and new types of jobs. This is in fact unsurprising given that consumer markets are particularly susceptible to youth participation (Zachara, 2021). As such, by examining how key Millennial norms are materialized in the economy, we not only deepen our understanding of the Millennial mentalité but also detect possible future configurations of the modern economy.

#### *4.2.1. Self-Reliance and the Creator*

To begin with, in economics and markets, *the mandate and push for self-reliance* has created a new and a more complex type of occupational profile inspired and demanded by the youth : the 'creator' or 'maker' (Davies, 2017). The creator aspires to generate wealth directly from audiences by monetizing creativity, individual skills, and services through directly using loose networks and technology rather than the mediation of centralized corporations (Morgan & Nelligan, 2018).

This new profile resettles boundaries of economic participation, occupational identity and working life set by the 20$^{th}$ century's centralized, large-scale Fordist economy (De Stefano, 2015). The 20$^{th}$ century's market economy revolved around predictability, standardized production, and controlled improvements (Audretsch and Thurik, 2004). School-to-work transition and career directions were rather linear with a laid-out road map composed of structured economic behavior (graduate, land an internship, apply for jobs, climb the corporate ladder, etc.) (Morgan & Nelligan, 2018). Working life was defined primarily through salaried-employment at rigid organizational structures and communities of practices, which provided life-long employment and a safety net (Manyika et al., 2016). Occupational ethics capitalized compliance to hierarchy, mastering of rules and bureaucratic producers, and a separation of 'work and play' –where play refers to fun, meaning, leisure, passion, and emotions (Morgan & Nelligan, 2018).

The creator is a response to a new paradigm, where market experience is being rebuilt around uncertainty and risk and the erosion of social codes, road maps, and strategies (education, compli-

ance, etc. ) that were once able to provide certain labor outcomes (Zachara, 2021). As a result, similar to the self-responsible citizen, the creator aspires and demands to be emancipated from centralized corporations and structured economic behavior. There is instead a growing commitment to the idea that one is responsible to shape one's own work life and look out for opportunities. As working life and career direction move away from Fordist connotations and previously useful collective guides, Millennials' working life take more individually shaped, and consequently non-linear forms, marked by back-tracking, frequent breaks in employment, and retraining among multiple careers (Furlong, et al., 2006).

These changes are embodied in the rapid growth of, in the last two decades or so, non-traditional economies such as lean start-up businesses, gig economy, crowd-work, and the 'passion economy'. Consider, for example, the UBER drivers across the globe, or the Turkish job-search apps such as Hemenis and Armut, which connect job seekers with performance seekers on-demand (ranging from home renovation, driving, cleaning, moving, teaching, fitness training to health services).

Across these non-traditional economies, the youth outsource their activities to individuals and crowds rather than managers and complex companies (De Stefano, 2015), enjoy more choices and control than what the 9-to-5 work structure offers, juggle multiple careers and skills, and make up rules as they go based on instant customer reviews/ratings rather than bureaucratic, managerial performance-reviews.

While cross-national data on gig economy and non-traditional types of work are yet to be developed, a number of conventional measurements have already captured the growth of self-reliant attitude in the economy among the youth. In labor preferences, for example, Millennials globally favor self-employment or working for a start-up over corporate jobs and public employment; the latter is true even in the Gulf region where public employment comes with voluminous benefits (BNP Paribas 2015; Buckner, et al., 2017; Momani 2017). Importantly, this is not driven merely by economic necessity ; for example, a majority of MENA youth prefer self-employment and a large part among those indicate this preference to be related to a quest for greater independence (Buckner, et al., 2017). On the other hand, when Millennials opt for employment, they seek a management culture that would allow them to pursue 'individual purpose': inserting personal ideals into the organization, contributing to innovation, rapid advancement, investing in personal skills, and establishing a work-life balance (Zachara, 2021).

To reiterate, the Millennial turn towards self-reliance as a generational element has been driven both by necessity and new opportunities. In the economy too, self-reliance has been compelled both by uncertain economic contexts as well as the empowerment of the self through a skill revolution and digital technologies. In terms of its implications too, self-reliance produces both new economic opportunities and new economic vulnerabilities, such as a severe commodification and informalization of work (De Stefano, 2015). The point, however, is that differing from past generations, the formative experience of Millennials has generated a new genre of economic agency, where ordinary individuals can circumnavigate large units to generate income, as such, resett ing the boundaries of enterprises and working life.

#### *4.2.2. Quotidianism and Passion Economy*

In the political realm, the push for self-reliance has been accompanied with a shift away from grand- ideological narratives towards a politics of the ordinary. In their economic orientations too, we find Millennials to be drifting away from growth ideologies and grand market narratives (such

as the belief in the capitalism - democracy nexus) to more everyday-life based, practical, and personalized conceptions of prosperity, economic agency, and economic function.

More specifically, Millennials are turning away from the 20th century state-centric growth notions, which revolved around such traditional symbols of material status as wealth accumulation, greater affluence, and achieving superiority (Zacharia, 2021). Disillusioned by this primarily material and national-bounded framework, Millennials rethink economics in more technology- and human-oriented and global frames (Zacharia, 2021). They orient economics (production, forms of businesses, working life, power structures, capital to environment relationship, etc.) to "…producing social use value rather than mere monetary exchange value" (Zachara, 2021:13), identification of human needs, being part of solving global problems, and bringing about social and political change.

This economic thinking is well manifested in Millennials' holistic approach to market institutions: they think of market institutions to be comparable to non profits and political organizations and thus assign them roles and responsibilities in shaping social realities (Zachara, 2021). Both as consumers and employees, for example, they "…expect companies to care about social issues and are ready to build their relations with commercial partners and employees dedicated to the idea of the greater good…". (Zachara, 2021:5).

Yet, more than influencing consumption patterns, marketing and management culture, the Millennial economic orientation has resulted in new forms of market practices and economies. T he most recent example of this is the "passion economy", a market which now involves about 50 million self-defined content creators worldwide, composed mostly of Generation Z, generating income either full-time or as amateurs.

While the passion economy is part of the broader non-traditional gig and crowd work, it is unique in the sense that it monetizes individuality, creativity, hobbies, passions, personality, and talent (Morgan & Nelligan, 2018)— ranging from producing music, streaming e-sports or games, video production, writing blogs or poetry, teaching classes, etc. This content-driven economy also replaces one-to-one services to selling intellectual property digitally on a one-to-many basis, thereby enabling ordinary individuals (as young as sixteen or seventeen years old) to acquire a great amount of wealth in as little as a few years. On Subtack, a writers' platform, for example, the top 10 creators collectively bring in more than $7 million annually (Fatemi, 2021).

The argument here is not that all Millennials of each country have the same access to, skills for or the interest in the passion economy, nor that each who is engaged will be equally rewarded financially. Rather, the passion economy showcases the emerging definitions of production and consumption. While the 20th century's corporate capitalism banished passion, creativity, personality, and emotions from working life and culture, seeing them as antithetical to productive labor (Morgan & Nelligan, 2018), passion economy turns them into new commodities for profit generation. More broadly, it fuses work and play and also ethics, where the definition of labor also changes from a purely economic function to a 'talent,' producing passionate, authentic, and artistic work (Morgan & Nelligan, 2018).

#### *4.2.3. Regeneration and Critical-Making*

The growth of non-traditional economies such as the passion economy, more broadly, represents the *regenerative* capacity of Millennials. In the political arena, regeneration is embodied in DIY- forms of citizenship, where ordinary individuals seek to define their own citizenship paths beyond what is offered by traditional political actors.

In the economy and markets too, Millennials resist the hegemony of impersonal structures (governments, big corporations, IP services, and experts) and are reluctant to settle down with market philosophies, tactics, and normative orientations imposed by these structures (Wehr, 2013; Zacharia, 2021). In simpler terms, they are not content with 'black-boxes' that surround modern societies, whether these relate to technology, material products, or global financial agreements that exclude public participation.

Millennials instead have adopted a new mindset, which we may conceptualize as 'critical-making[2]': seeking to create new economic realities, rules, and interpretive schemes. In essence, critical-making is about pushing for greater public participation in the production of things, tactics, solutions, and systems. This urge is manifested in various forms. Some of these are more institutionalized. For example, maker-spaces in Turkey, Egypt, Spain, Nigeria or elsewhere provide technologies and tools to ordinary individuals that used to be accessible only by big firms and industries. These tools enable individuals to fabricate innovative or customized products that may better reflect individual and collective needs.

Some critical-making practices are more causal, such as YouTube videos on how to change tires, make cleaning products, produce your own keyboard, or manage finances. These are all intended to remove middlemen and authoritative experts and allow the public to take part in production of things and control their engagement with the material world. Critical-making as such is not just about certain skills but more broadly is an approach to relate to the material world and processes.

While the refusal to take things and products for granted aligns well with the self-reliant attitudes of Millennials, critical-making is neither self-centered individualism nor merely artistic self-expression. On the one hand, the urge for public participation is rooted in such communal normative orientations as sharing information, experience, data, autonomy, self-determination, and promoting 'interoperability' so that things/systems that are opaque to the everyday user and the public have become open, accessible and known.

On the other hand, public participation and emancipation from the hegemony of impersonal systems are considered as ways to improve the public good, making and optimizing products, processes, businesses, and, more broadly, "the way we handle the world" (Gauntlett 2013). The content of such optimization ranges: identifying vulnerabilities in social and material systems, formulating better/cheaper/faster solutions, or revealing previously unseen opportunities. Such acts can be used to optimize solutions in any sector of society for any problem, spiraling from domestic hacks (e.g., sharing recipes for baking bread at home on YouTube) to citizen science (e.g., producing one's own bio diesel) to sandboxing policy problems across health, urban transportation, gender-equality, or animal rights.

By promoting public participation and regeneration, critical-making additionally bears new normative meanings and values to markets, production, and growth: disruption, taking things apart, re-designing, tinkering, customization and playful cleverness take precedence over values of the 20th century's managed economy such as maintaining the status quo, hierarchy, mass-production, and standardization.

Overall, critical-making points to new ways of relating to markets and material spaces which distinguish Millennials. In the lives of previous generations, the direction and evolution of the

2 The term was originally used by Ratto (2011) to describe the connection between critical thinking and physical making.

economy has been mainly driven by large institutions via global agreements and national policies. Such processes and actors are still pivotal. Nonetheless, in the lives of Millennials there is a growing demand as well as space for bottom-up economic processes to impact and influence the direction of the economy and markets (Zacharia, 2021).

Whether these bottom-up processes, led mainly by Millennials, can reshape socioeconomic realities remains to be seen. Although the legitimacy of large economic actors and the neo-liberal vision of the economy continue to weaken, critical-making efforts to escape the power of markets and bureaucracies have already been co-opted both commercially and politically (consider Obama's N ation of M akers initiative) (Ratto & Boler, 2014). Moreover, Millennials still operate within a top-down socioeconomic environment (Zacharia, 2021). What is critical is that based on their formative experiences, Millennials have already produced new market practices and normative orientations, which require us to at least acknowledge their potential to challenge established forms of socio-economic organization.

**5. Conclusion**

In this paper, using Mannheim, I identified Millennials (covering both Gen Y and Gen Z) as a global generation that has spawned a new generational style. I provided a brief overview of the historical conditions that shaped Millennials' life experiences and argued that these formative experiences have impelled at least three meaningful norms that distinguish Millennials' generational style: *self-reliance*, *quotidianism* and *regeneration*. I then traced manifestations of these norms in politics and the economy. The paper as such is a step towards building a cohesive generational profile of Millennials.

By treating Millennials as a new generation, this paper attempts to move beyond the dichotomous view of the youth either as a threat to the social order or as heroic figures representative of their generation. This dichotomous view more largely treats young people as passive receivers of adult-driven agendas and policies and rarely as interactive subjects of substantial political, social, or economic change. As a result, such approaches miss the links between social change and new members of society. The broad implication is that we need broader conceptualizations of young adult s' agency.

This paper also attempts to move beyond a romanticized perspective of youth and social change by linking Millennial novelties with their formative experiences and thus grounds change driven by youth with in a specific historical context. By examining these links, this paper also allows space for an interaction between structure (history, international and national policies and economic ideology and trends) and agency (how actors relate to and respond to macro processes).

Such a grounded and broader conceptualization of youth agency is particularly important for Muslim youth as orientalist depictions inform how their agency is approached and understood. Such orientalist perspectives view Muslim youth either as foot soldiers for or against Islamism, supposedly trapped in a stagnant religion in contrast to young people in other, dynamic parts of the world . These orientalist depictions ignore a large middle category of ordinary Muslim youth who are neither leaders nor troublemakers, but who create new centers of configuration in society, from new citizenship and economic norms to new ways of reviving, experiencing, and practicing religion.

Subsequent empirical work is needed to examine more precisely the Millennial generational style and its core norms as identified here. One future direction would be looking at religion and another would be education. If the profiling here is correct, we would find manifestations of the three elements identified here in other areas of life as well.

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